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ROTH and AYERS

"THE PLAGUE OF THE LOCUST!"

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X-MEN! THE MOST UNUSUAL FIGHTING TEAM OF ALL TIME!

"THE PLAGUE OF THE LOCUST!"

I HOPE YOU WON'T MIND, PROFESSOR, IF I BORROW THESE VOLUMES ON *TELEKINETIC RESEARCH!* WITH THEM, I CAN CONTINUE TO STUDY WAYS TO UTILIZE MY MUTANT POWER, EVEN WHEN I'M--- *GONE!*

I'LL RETURN THEM TO YOU... AS SOON AS *POSSIBLE!*

THE SCHOOL WON'T BE THE *SAME* WITHOUT MARVEL GIRL, WILL IT, SCOTT?

NO, BOBBY, I--GUESS NOT!

AND, NEITHER WILL *I*... *EVER!*

FOR MONTHS, I'VE WANTED JEAN TO RETURN MY *AFFECTION* FOR HER! AND NOW, JUST WHEN I THOUGHT I MIGHT HAVE A *CHANCE*, I MAY HAVE LOST HER... *FOR GOOD!*

YOU MAY *KEEP* THEM, JEAN...WITH OUR *COMPLI-MENTS!* CONSIDER THEM A PARTING GIFT FROM... THE *X-MEN!*

SHAKESPEARE EXPOSTULATED THAT PARTING IS SWEET *SORROW* ---I WONDER IF PERCHANCE THE BARD MIGHT HAVE BEEN A *MUTANT!*

JUST IN CASE THIS EMOTION-DRENCHED SCENE LEAVES ANY MIXED-UP MARVELITES FEELING AS IF THEY'VE *MISSED* SOMETHING, ALLOW US TO QUICKLY FILL YOU IN! AT THE CONCLUSION OF LAST ISH'S EPIC BATTLE WITH THE MALEVOLENT *MAGGIA*, A SADDENED JEAN GREY RECEIVED A SHOCKING *LETTER!*

UNAWARE OF HER DUAL ROLE AS ONE OF THE SUPER-POWERED *X-MEN*, HER PARENTS HAVE WITHDRAWN HER FROM PROFESSOR XAVIER'S PRIVATE SCHOOL---AND ARE SENDING HER TO A MORE CONVENTIONAL *COLLEGE!*

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MOM AND DAD FEEL THAT, SINCE WE FORMALLY *GRADUATED* SOME TIME AGO*, IT'S TIME I PURSUED A COLLEGE DEGREE... *ELSE-WHERE!*

PERHAPS THEY ARE *RIGHT!* BESIDES, SINCE YOU'LL BE ATTENDING *METRO COLLEGE*, WHICH ISN'T FAR AWAY, YOU CAN *VISIT* US OFTEN!

YES...I CAN! NOW, EXCUSE ME, PLEASE.. I MUST-- CHANGE!

* IN ISH #7-- WE *THINK!* ..INSECURE STAN.

CHANGE, MY *EYE!* THOSE WERE *TEAR-DROPS* I SAW AS SHE RAN UPSTAIRS! PROFESSOR, CAN'T WE..?

NO, WARREN... WE CAN DO *NOTHING!* THIS MATTER IS BETWEEN JEAN AND HER *PARENTS!* WE CAN ONLY HOPE THAT ONE DAY SHE RETURNS ...TO *STAY!*

MEANWHILE, WHEN SHE COMES DOWN, WE MUST TRY TO MAKE LEAVING *EASIER* FOR HER!

BOBBY, BRING ME OUR *PRESENT*, PLEASE!

AND SO, WHEN AN OUTWARDLY-COMPOSED MARVEL GIRL REJOINS THE DECEPTIVELY JOVIAL GROUP---

SAY, YOU LOOK LIKE YOU WERE *MADE* TO WEAR THOSE COLLEGIATE THREADS!

WHY, THANK YOU, WARREN! BUT... WHAT'S *THAT*, PROFESSOR?

YOU DIDN'T THINK WE'D LET YOU GO WITH JUST A COUPLE OF MUSTY *TEXT-BOOKS* TO REMEMBER US BY, DIDJA?

PLEASE ACCEPT THIS *CORSAGE*, JEAN---IT'S FROM *ALL* OF US!

THE BEAST *ECHOES* ICEMAN'S SENTIMENTS... THOUGH I SEE NO REASON FOR HIS UNSEEMLY SLUR AGAINST *TEXTBOOKS!*

I'LL TREASURE IT... *ALWAYS!*

I *WON'T* CRY IN FRONT OF THEM.. I *WON'T!*

BUT, ALL MY LIFE, I'LL *REMEMBER* THIS DAY---AND BE GLAD THAT I WAS PRIVILEGED, FOR A TIME AT LEAST, TO BE *ONE* OF THEM!

THEN, AFTER THE OTHERS HAVE SAID THEIR FAREWELLS TO JEAN, SCOTT AND WARREN SILENTLY DRIVE THE GIRL THEY BOTH LOVE TOWARDS *METRO COLLEGE*, AS ALL THREE THINK THEIR OWN INNERMOST THOUGHTS...

JOHNNY STORM GOES TO METRO! HE CAN FLY, JUST LIKE *I* CAN! I WONDER IF JEANIE'LL GET INTERESTED IN *HIM?!*

ALL THE X-MEN SEEMED SO SORRY I WAS GOING--- EXCEPT *SCOTT!* HE HASN'T SPOKEN TEN WORDS ALL *MORNING!*

CAN'T HE SEE THAT I'LL *MISS* HIM... MORE THAN *ANYONE?*

IF ONLY I DARED HOLD HER IN MY ARMS--- AND TELL HER HOW MUCH I NEED HER! BUT I *CAN'T*---NOT UNTIL I'M CURED OF THE CURSE OF MY DEADLY *EYES!*

FINALLY, AS THE TORRENTIAL DOWNPOUR CONTINUES, THE SOMBRE, REGAL SEDAN ARRIVES AT THE ENROLL-MENT CENTER---

HERE, JEAN--- LET ME TAKE YOUR *SUIT-CASE!*

THANK YOU, SCOTT!

THAT TONE IN HIS VOICE--- ALMOST AS IF HE... BUT, I'M *IMAGINING* THINGS! HE *NEVER* CARED FOR ME--- AND NEVER *WILL!*

LET'S HURRY INSIDE, JEAN..YOU'LL CATCH A *COLD* OUT HERE IN THE RAIN!

JEAN'S LEAVING HAS STARTED ME THINKING... IS IT PERHAPS TIME THAT *I, TOO,* QUIT THE X-MEN IN PURSUIT OF A MORE NORMAL LIFE? OR AM I DOOMED TO BE NOTHING BUT A SUPER-POWERED FREAK...TILL I *DIE?*

STARTING COLLEGE DURING THE SUMMER IS A GOOD IDEA, JEAN... YOU'LL GET A JUMP ON ALL YOUR *STUDIES* THAT WAY!

AND, WHEN *FALL* COMES, THE *HUMAN TORCH* IS A STUDENT HERE! WOULDN'T HE FLIP TO FIND OUT HE ISN'T THE *ONLY* SUPER-HERO ON CAMPUS!

BUT, HE *WON'T* FIND OUT, WARREN! HERE AT COLLEGE, I'LL BE PLAIN *JEAN GREY*...AND NOTHING MORE!

POOR *ANGEL*...TRYING SO HARD TO CHEER ME UP, EVEN THOUGH HE'D *HATE* THE THOUGHT OF MY DATING JOHNNY STORM!

IF ONLY I COULD HAVE FALLEN IN LOVE WITH *HIM*, INSTEAD OF WITH *SCOTT!* BUT, MAYBE IT'S TOO LATE NOW... FOR *ANY* OF US!

THEN, AT THE DOOR OF THE ADMISSIONS BUILDING...

HELLO, GROUP! *TED ROBERTS* IS THE NAME! MAY I TAKE IT THAT YOU THREE LOST SOULS ARE HERE TO *ENLIST?*

IF YOU MEAN *ENROLL*, FELLA, JUST THE *YOUNG LADY!* WE'RE ONLY...

MESSAGE RECEIVED! NOW THEN, MISS...

JEAN... JEAN GREY!

IF YOU'LL JUST FOLLOW ME, I'LL GET YOU CHECKED THROUGH IN *NO TIME*... COMPLIMENTS OF THE HOUSE!

THANK YOU, TED! THAT'S VERY *NICE* OF YOU!

OF COURSE, IN *EXCHANGE*, YOU HAVE TO SPLIT A *BIG ORANGE DRINK* WITH ME!

I'D *LIKE* THAT, TED...VERY MUCH!

ANYTHING...ANYTHING THAT WILL KEEP ME FROM LOOKING BACK...AT *SCOTT!*

SO...THAT'S HOW IT *ENDS!* BUT MAYBE IT'S ALL FOR THE *BEST*...AT LEAST, THAT'S WHAT I'VE GOT TO KEEP *TELLING* MYSELF!

SO MUCH FOR SMALL TALK *THIS* MONTH...WE'VE A REAL ODDBALL *BADDIE* WAITING FOR YOU... FOR, AT THAT VERY SECOND, MILES AWAY...

THE *SOIL CONDITIONS* ARE IDEAL FOR HATCHING MY IONICALLY-TREATED *INSECT EGGS!* AND SO, THIS IS THE DAY OF...*THE LOCUST!*

THE NEXT INSTANT, AS THE GLOWING, PULSATING "EGGS" STRIKE THE MARSHY SOIL OF THE WHEAT FIELD, THEY SEEM TO BURST ALMOST ON CONTACT...

...AND, FROM THE EGGS BURST *NYMPHS*...YOUNG LOCUSTS WHICH *GROW VISIBLY* WITH EACH BITE OF THE MOIST GRAIN...

FEED WELL, MY PRETTIES... *FEED WELL!* NOW, ONLY *I*, YOUR *LEADER*, AM PRESENT TO HEAR YOUR SONG OF *MOUNTING MENACE!*

BUT SOON, THE *WORLD* SHALL KNOW THE MEANING OF THAT SOUND... AND LIVE IN *TERROR* OF IT!

KRUNCH!

KRUNCH! KRUNCH!

AND, INDEED, THE WORLD *BEGINS* TO LEARN OF ITS FANTASTIC DANGER ALMOST ATONCE, AS---

KRUNCH! KRUNCH! KRUNCH!

LISTEN--! DO YOU HEAR THAT *CHOMP-ING* SOUND, CORA?

MMM? I THOUGHT IT WAS *YOU* HAVING AN EARLY *BREAK-FAST!*

IT'S PRO-BABLY NOTHING.. GO BACK TO *SLEEP!*

BUT, CURIOSITY IS A POWERFUL FORCE, AND---

NOW, WE'LL JUST SEE WHAT---

CORA! FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE, *COME HERE.. QUICK!*

WHAT *IS* IT, HENRY? WHAT'S *WRONG?*

I--I CAN'T DESCRIBE IT! YOU'VE GOT TO SEE FOR *YOURSELF!*

PERHAPS TRUER WORDS WERE NEVER SPOKEN! FOR, AS THE FARMER AND HIS WIFE GAZE IN UTTER ASTON-ISHMENT, AN INCREDIBLE, ALMOST NIGHTMARISH SCENE MEETS THEIR STARTLED EYES---

EAT HEARTILY, MY SIX-LEGGED SUBJECTS!

FOR, WITH EACH TENDER MORSEL THAT YOU DEVOUR, YOU INCREASE IN *SIZE!* ALREADY, YOU ARE HUNDREDS OF TIMES LARGER THAN YOUR FELLOW INSECTS---AND THAT IS BUT THE *BEGINNING!*

TOO LONG HAVE *LESSER MORTALS* LORDED IT OVER THIS ABUNDANT PLANET! IT IS NOT THE *WEAK* WHO MUST INHERIT THE EARTH, BUT THE *STRONG*---AND *WE* ARE THE *STRONG!*

NOTE TO ARMCHAIR PSYCHOLOGISTS: IF, AS YOU READ ON, IT SEEMS TO YOU THAT OUR ORTHOPTEROUS ANTAGONIST HAS A DISTINCT *FASCIST FIXATION,* PLEASE FORWARD ALL ANALYSES TO MIGHTY MARVEL---WE'RE *STILL* TRYIN' TO FIGURE HIM OUT!
--- *STAN AND THE GANG.*

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BUT, MEANWHILE, THE INCREDULOUS FARMER HAS PHONED THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES ... AND, AS MORNING DAWNS ...

BY THE TIME I COULD LOAD MY *GUN*, THE OVERSIZED CRITTERS HAD ALREADY LEVELED MY FIELD ... AND *HOPPED AWAY!*

WHAT'S MORE, I'D SWEAR ONE OF 'EM WAS *HALF HUMAN!*

SURE, MISTER! AND AT WHAT TIME DID THE *GOOD FAIRIES* COME FLYIN' BY?

DON'T SHRUG OFF HIS STORY *TOO FAST*, MARV! *SOMETHING* CERTAINLY RAZED THIS PLACE ... AND IT WASN'T *PINK ELEPHANTS!*

PERSONALLY, IN THIS DAY AND AGE, I WOULDN'T EVEN BET *THAT* WAS IMPOSSIBLE!

POLICE

A FEW HOURS LATER, AS THE X-MEN GO THROUGH THEIR PACES IN WESTCHESTER COUNTY ...

LOOK ALIVE, ANGEL! YOU BARELY CLEARED ICEMAN'S *HOOP!*

KEEP YOUR *GOGGLES* ON, CYKE! THE WORLD WOULDN'T CRUMBLE IF I *HIT* IT!

TRANSLATION: WITH JEAN ABSENT, THERE'S NO ONE TO HEAP *APPROBATION* UPON HIS PEERLESS PERFORMANCE!

THANKS, BEAST! NOW IF SOMEBODY'LL JUST TRANSLATE YOUR *TRANSLATION!*

OH OH! HEADS UP, COMPATRIOTS! HERE COMES THE *PROFESSOR!*

I'M AFRAID YOUR TRAINING SESSION IS *OVER* FOR THE PRESENT! I'VE JUST HEARD ALARMING *REPORTS* ON THE RADIO ... REPORTS OF *GIANT LOCUSTS* DEVASTATING A SERIES OF FARMS UPSTATE!

IF THIS INFORMATION IS TRUE, THESE HUGE INSECTS ARE POSSIBLY *MUTATIONS* ... AND THAT MAKES THEM THE BUSINESS OF ... THE *X-MEN!*

BEFORE LONG ---

BOY, PROFESSOR, OUR HIGH-SPEED 'COPTER CAN REALLY *TRAVEL!* EVEN THE *NATIONAL GUARD* HASN'T HAD TIME TO MAKE THE SCENE YET!

THAT, BOBBY, IS PRECISELY WHY WE MUST MAKE OUR INVESTIGATIONS *QUICKLY!* I WANT TO AVOID ASSOCIATING THIS MENACE WITH THE X-MEN IN THE MIND OF THE *PUBLIC!*

AH, THERE IS OUR QUARRY, DIRECTLY *BELOW!* PREPARE FOR *LANDING!*

HOLY COW ... LOOK AT THE *SIZE* OF THOSE BABIES!

BUT, THERE ARE ONLY A *DOZEN* OF 'EM, AT *MOST!*

PERHAPS, FOR *NOW!* BUT, THOSE IN TURN MIGHT BREED COUNTLESS *OTHERS!*

AND *THEN* WHERE WOULD MANKIND BE?

KRUNCH! KRAK!

WHILE, UNOBSERVED BY THE MARVELOUS MUTANTS, IN A NEARBY GROVE...

THE *X-MEN!* I AM NOT YET PREPARED TO *FACE* THEM! BUT, NO MATTER...!

THIS EXPERIMENT HAS SERVED ITS PURPOSE! I SHALL BIDE MY TIME--AND STRIKE *AGAIN!*

GOSH, IT SEEMS STRANGE TO BE GOING INTO ACTION WITHOUT *MARVEL GIRL!*

NO TIME TO WORRY ABOUT *THAT*, ICEMAN! PROFESSOR XAVIER WANTS ONE OF THESE CREATURES FOR *STUDY!*

NO SOONER SAID THAN *DONE*, DAUNTLESS DEPUTY LEADER!

NOTICE, GROUP, WITH WHAT *GUILELESS GRACE* THE GRANDILOQUENT BEAST ACCOSTS HIS PERPLEXED PREY!

THUMP!

RESTRAIN YOURSELF, INVERTEBRATE! *I'M* SUPPOSED TO BE APPREHENDING *YOU!*

KUH-PWANG!

HMMM... THIS WOULD SEEM TO BE MORE IN *YOUR* DEPARTMENT, ANGEL! CARE TO LEND AN *ASSIST?*

JUST HANG ON, BEASTIE! I'LL TAKE CARE OF THE *HARD* PART!

THEN, SWIFTLY ASCENDING TO A GREATER HEIGHT, THE WINGED WARRIOR SWOOPS AT HIS TARGET WITH DAZZLING SPEED---

A GOOD *POWER-DIVE* SHOULD GIVE ME ENOUGH FORCE TO *BUG* OUR LITTLE PLAYMATE!

UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, MY BIRD-LIKE BENEFACTOR, I'LL FORGIVE YOUR SOMEWHAT UNIMAGINATIVE ATTEMPT AT *HUMOR!*

THANKS *MUCHLY!*

BWAK!

THAT *FINISHED* HIM! HE'S DROPPING LIKE A *STONE!*

FOR ALL THEIR SIZE, THESE LOCUSTS ARE RELATIVELY *DEFENSELESS!*

AGAINST A SUPER-POWERED MUTANT, *YES!* BUT, AN ORDINARY *HOMO SAPIENS* WOULD HARDLY FARE SO WELL!

ALSO, WHAT IF EVERY LOCUST ON *EARTH* BECAME SO LARGE? *THAT'S* WHAT DISTURBS THE *PROFESSOR!*

JUST THEN, DIRECTLY BELOW---

WATCH *THIS* TOSS, CYCLOPS!

THERE'S NOTHING LIKE A NICE FRESH *ICE SPEAR* FOR COOLING DOWN A RAMPAGING LOCUST, I ALWAYS SAY!

GREAT, BOBBY--- BUT DO IT *FAST!* WE'RE ON A *TIGHT SCHEDULE*, REMEMBER!

ZIISSH

THAK!

GOT ONE! JUST LIKE SHOOTIN' FISH IN A *BARREL!* I'M GETTIN' TO BE A REGULAR *HAWKEYE!*

HEY, CREW, I WONDER IF THERE'S A *SUPER-HERO OLYMPICS!* IF THERE *IS*, I OUGHTTA---

YIPES! I DIDN'T SEE THAT LOCUST *BEHIND* ME! ITS CHEWERS'VE GOT ME IN A *STEEL GRIP!*

HOLD STILL, ICEMAN! LET ME GET A *GOOD SHOT* AT IT!

PZAP!

THAT'S ONE *MORE* INSECT WHOSE MUNCHING DAYS ARE OVER!

THANKS, CYKE! HE WOULDN'T HAVE CARED MUCH FOR *ICEMAN À LA MODE*, ANYWAY!

NOW, LET'S TAKE CARE OF THE *REST* OF EM!

BUT, AT THAT MOMENT, OUTRAGEOUS *FORTUNE* LENDS A HAND--- IN THE SHAPE OF AN APPROACHING *HELICOPTER* ---

WE CAN'T BE SURE THAT THIS *PESTICIDE* WILL HAVE ANY EFFECT ON THOSE OVERGROWN MONSTERS, BUT ANYTHING IS WORTH A *TRY!*

THE *NATIONAL GUARD'S* COMING RIGHT BEHIND ME, BUT FIRST THEY WANT TO SEE IF THIS NEW *CHEMICAL SPRAY* HAS ANY EFFECT!

OH-OH! WE'RE *IN* FOR IT! THAT PILOT DOESN'T SEE US--- AND HE'S *DUSTING THE FIELD!*

COVER YOUR FACES! :KOFF!: THIS STUFF IS *STRONG!*

:KOFF!: WHEN ARE THE X-MEN GONNA STOP BEIN' THE *HARD-LUCK HARRYS OF HERODOM?*

CAN'T *SEE*---IT'S THICK AS *PEA SOUP!*

ANGEL---USE YOUR WINGS AS A *FAN*, TO CLEAR A BREATHING SPACE FOR ALL OF YOU!

A TELEPATHIC THOUGHT FROM *PROFESSOR X!* AS ALWAYS, HE'S IN :KOFF: RELATIVE CONTROL OF THE SITUATION!

AND, AS THE HIGH-FLYING ANGEL CARRIES OUT HIS ORDERS...

YOU'RE A FRIEND IN NEED, WARRY BOY!

BUT, I'M AFRAID OUR BUDDY *STRUCK OUT!* THE INSECTS WEREN'T *FAZED!*

X-MEN... I SENSE *SOLDIERS* DRAWING NEAR! RETURN TO THE 'COPTER..WITH ONE OF THE *SPECIMENS!*

A PLEASURE, SIR! THE AUTHORITIES *ALREADY* HAVE A PROPENSITY FOR SUSPECTING US OF UNLAWFUL ACTIVITY!

EXACTLY ONE MINUTE LATER, AS ARMED TROOPS APPEAR ON THE SCENE---

THE FLAME-THROWERS WILL DISPOSE OF THE FEW REMAINING LOCUSTS! IT IS FORTUNATE THEY WERE NOT *NUMEROUS!*

BUT, WILL MANKIND BE SO LUCKY *NEXT TIME?*

OKAY, MEN... LET'S *MOP UP* THOSE SIX-LEGGED MENACES!

FWOOSH!

BUT NOW, JUST FOR A *CHANGE OF PACE*, LET'S SKIP AHEAD A FEW DAYS ...AND SHIFT THE SCENE TO *METRO COLLEGE*---

WELL, IF IT ISN'T *JEAN GREY!* AND HOW'S THE CAMPUS' CUTEST COED ADJUSTING TO THE SCENT OF *IVY?*

IT'S GREAT, TED... ALTHOUGH I'M STILL JUST A BIT... *LONELY!*

NOTE: NO, THIS *ISN'T* REALLY JOHNNY STORM AND WYATT WINGFOOT... THEY'RE IN THE *HIMALAYAS!* WE JUST WANTED TO SEE IF YOU WERE PAYING *ATTENTION!* ---SNEAKY STAN.

I GUESSED AS MUCH! LET'S FALL BY THE *COFFEE SHOP* AND YOU CAN TELL ME ALL *ABOUT* IT!

SOON, IN THE CONGENIAL ATMOSPHERE OF THE METRO STUDENT CENTER...

NOW, THEN, SUPPOSE YOU FILL ME IN ON YOUR PROBLEMS IN ADJUSTING TO AN *UNFAMILIAR ENVIRONMENT!*

LOOK, CHUCK... THERE'S MR. MAD SCIENTIST HIMSELF... OL' *DOC HOPPER!*

IN CASE YOU COULDN'T TELL FROM THAT SPEECH, I'M A *PSYCHOLOGY MINOR* IN MY SPARE TIME! I...

KEEP IT *DOWN*, MAN... HE'LL *HEAR* YA!

I WONDER WHY THOSE STUDENTS ARE MAKING FUN OF THAT *BEARDED MAN?!*

KEEP IT *DOWN?* WHAT *FOR*, CHUCK? OL' HOPPER DOESN'T CARE WHAT *WE* THINK ABOUT 'IM!

HE'S GOT HIS *BUGS* TO KEEP HIM HAPPY!

IGNORANT, IMPUDENT *FOOLS!* WHEN YOU ARE ALL IN YOUR *GRAVES*, THE NAME OF *AUGUST HOPPER* WILL SHINE MORE BRIGHTLY THAN ANY OTHER! SCOFF WHILE YOU *MAY*... FOR THE DAY IS COMING WHEN---

BAH! WHY DO I WASTE MY TIME ON *PRATTLING DOLTS?* YOU WILL LEARN--- *ALL* OF YOU!

LOOKS LIKE YOU WERE *RIGHT*, BOB...HE'S STILL AS KOOKIE AS *EVER!*

IT'S PROBABLY A GOOD THING THAT METRO COLLEGE *FIRED* HIM LAST SEMESTER!

TED--WHO *IS* THAT MAN? HE LOOKS SO *FAMILIAR*, SOMEHOW---

THAT'S *DR. HOPPER*, DOLL! HE LIVES NEARBY AND *EATS* HERE OCCASIONALLY...

HE WAS A TOP NAME IN *ENTEMOLOGY*... THE STUDY OF INSECTS... TILL SOME OF HIS CRACKPOT THEORIES GOT HIM *FIRED!*

DON'T SHED *TOO* MANY TEARS FOR HIM, THOUGH! HE WORKS FOR *RYAN CHEMICALS* NOW, I HEAR! WHY?

NOTHING..IT'S JUST SOMETHING *ABOUT* HIM... SOMETHING IN HIS *VOICE*...

I MUST STOP *LOOKING* FOR DANGER...AS IF I WERE STILL ONE OF THE *X-MEN!*

HOWEVER, IF JEAN COULD FOLLOW THE TEMPESTUOUS DR. HOPPER TO HIS *RYAN CHEMICALS* LAB, SHE WOULD SOON OBSERVE ---

SO..IT IS NOT ENOUGH THAT THEY HAVE TAKEN AWAY MY *PROFESSORSHIP*... DEPRIVED MY INSECT-MUTATION THEORIES OF AN AUDIENCE OF *RECEPTIVE MINDS!*

THEY MUST *MOCK* ME, AS WELL... CALL ME "CRACKPOT" AND "MAD SCIENTIST"!

I... *MAD!!* THAT IS THE *SUPREME IRONY!*

FOR, IT IS I WHO AM THE SANEST OF *ALL!* ONLY *I* HAVE HAD THE *SHEER GENIUS* TO DEVELOP THE MOST POTENT INSECTICIDES KNOWN TO *MAN!*

BUT, ALWAYS IN THE PAST, *OTHERS* HAVE TAKEN CREDIT FOR MY DISCOVERIES... FIRST METRO COLLEGE, AND NOW RYAN CHEMICALS! I HAVE REMAINED *UNKNOWN!*

NO MORE!! SOON, THE NAME OF *AUGUST HOPPER* WILL BE KNOWN THROUGHOUT THE *WORLD*... AS THE SAVIOR OF THE *HUMAN RACE!*

AND NOW, IT IS TIME TO TEST THE LATEST *IMPROVEMENTS* ON MY NEW FORMULA!

FZZZT!

FIRST, I ACTIVATE THIS SINGLE INSECT EGG WITH MY ORIGINAL *MAGNO-RAY!*

EXCELLENT! JUST AS *BEFORE*, THE NEWLY-HATCHED LARVA BEGINS TO *FEED*... AND INCREASES ITS BULK IMMEDIATELY AS IT DEVOURS ORDINARY LEAVES!

CHOMP!

CHOMP!

IT WAS THUS THAT I, IN MY INGENIOUS GUISE OF THE *LOCUST*, CREATED THE SMALL BUT MIGHTY ARMY OF INSECTS WHICH THE ACCURSED *X-MEN* ATTACKED!

BUT, SINCE THAT MEETING, I HAVE *REFINED* THE MAGNO-RAY... AND DEVELOPED THIS *PORTABLE VERSION* OF IT!

BZIK!

AND IT *WORKS*.. AS I *KNEW* IT WOULD! THE RAY *ALONE* NOW INCREASED THAT BEETLE'S SIZE!

NOW, THE CARNIVOROUS BEETLE ATTACKS THE CATERPILLAR! IN THIS WAY, *NATURE* HAS ALWAYS CONTROLLED A BALANCE OF SPECIES!

BUT, THERE WILL *BE* NO SUCH CONTROL ACTING UPON MY *GIANT* INSECTS... AND MANKIND WILL BE *HELPLESS* BEFORE THEM!

THEN, *I*... *DR. HOPPER*... SHALL "DISCOVER" THE WAY TO *DESTROY* THEM... AND I SHALL RECEIVE THE PLAUDITS OF A DESPERATELY THANKFUL WORLD!

THUS, AT LAST, I WILL BE GIVEN THE *CREDIT* WHICH HAS BEEN SO LONG DENIED ME! MY FAME SHALL ENDURE *FOREVER!*

MEANWHILE, I MUST *DISINTEGRATE* THESE TWO SPECIMENS... LEST THEY BE DISCOVERED AND MY PURPOSE *THWARTED!*

IN A MATTER OF OF HOURS, MY INSECT LEGIONS WILL ATTACK *ANEW*... MORE POWERFUL, MORE NUMEROUS THAN *BEFORE!*

PZISST!

AND, IF THE X-MEN INTERFERE *AGAIN*... THEY WILL BE RUTHLESSLY *DESTROYED*, BY... *THE LOCUST!*

THE NEXT MORNING, IN THE LABORATORY OF *PROFESSOR XAVIER'S SCHOOL FOR GIFTED YOUNGSTERS*...

I HOPE THE PROF FINISHES HIS EXAMINATION OF THE GIANT LOCUST PRETTY SOON! I'VE GOT A DATE WITH *ZELDA* TONIGHT!

AND *I* WITH *VERA!*

WHAT'S THE *VERDICT*, PROFESSOR? IS THIS OVERSIZED ORTHOPTERAN A *MUTATION?*

IN A *SENSE*, HANK! HOWEVER, MY STUDY INDICATES THAT SOME *ARTIFICIAL MEANS* WAS USED TO INCREASE ITS STATURE!

IT WOULD APPEAR THAT THERE IS SOME *HUMAN AGENT* BEHIND THESE FANTASTIC CREATURES!

HUMAN AGENT? THAT JIBES WITH ONE FARMER'S CLAIM TO SEEING A *MAN* DIRECTING THE INSECTS' ACTIONS!

BUT WHAT *KIND* OF MAN, PROFESSOR? COULD IT BE THAT SOME *EVIL MUTANT* IS ON THE PROWL?

NEGATIVE, WARREN!

THE *X-COPTER* IS EQUIPPED WITH A A PORTABLE VERSION OF *CEREBRO*, AND IT WOULD HAVE REGISTERED ANY MUTANT HUMANS WITHIN A *TWENTY-MILE RADIUS!*

SO, NOW IT IS UP TO THE *FIVE* OF US TO...

CORRECTION, PROFESSOR..THE *SIX* OF US!

MARVEL GIRL! WHAT'RE *YOU* DOIN' HERE?

IT'S THE *WEEKEND*, YOU KNOW! WELL, MAY I COME IN, OR--?

WHERE DID YOU PICK UP THE *GIANT LOCUST?* I HAD HEARD *REPORTS* OF SOME UPSTATE, BUT...

WHAT DO *YOU* THINK? I WAS *ALREADY* GETTIN' TIRED OF LOOKING AT THE *BEAST!*

LIKEWISE, MY FROSTY FRIEND!

HAVE A *CHAIR*, LADY, AND WE'LL TELL YOU ALL *ABOUT* IT!

PERHAPS *I'D* BEST TAKE CARE OF THE *EXPLANATIONS*, ANGEL!

THEN, AFTER JEAN GREY IS FILLED IN, HURRIEDLY...

IT ALL SOUNDS UTTERLY *INCREDIBLE*.. AND YET, DR. HOPPER SEEMS TO HAVE PREDICTED *YEARS AGO* THAT THIS WOULD HAPPEN!

WELL, HE ...USED TO BE A PROFESSOR AT *METRO COLLEGE*...

WHAT? TELL ME *MORE*, JEAN! WHO IS THIS *DR. HOPPER?*

QUICKLY... I MUST *KNOW!* THE INFORMATION MAY BE *VITAL!*

SHE'S BEEN HERE TEN MINUTES, AND HASN'T EVEN *GLANCED* MY WAY! WAS I ONLY *IMAGINING*...THAT ONCE SHE *CARED?*

A BOY WHOM I MET TOLD ME THAT DR. HOPPER HOLDS SOME RATHER FAR FETCHED THEORIES ABOUT *INSECT MUTATION!* HE BELIEVES *IONIC BOMBARDMENT* COULD ONE DAY INCREASE THEIR SIZE...AND LEAD TO THE *DESTRUCTION OF MANKIND!*

HE PREACHED HIS THEORY SO VEHEMENTLY IN *CLASS* THAT THE COLLEGE HAD TO *DISMISS* HIM... AND NOW HE WORKS FOR *RYAN CHEMICALS!*

HMMM... IT MAY JUST BE THAT THIS *DR. HOPPER* IS MORE FAR-SIGHTED THAN THE WORLD *IMAGINES!* I THINK I HAD BETTER PAY HIM A VISIT... *AT ONCE!*

GET THE *CAR*, WARREN! YOU'RE DRIVING ME TO *RYAN CHEMICALS!*

A SHORT TIME LATER, THE MULTI-MILLION-DOLLAR PLANT WHICH EMPLOYS DR. AUGUST HOPPER RECEIVES A FATEFUL VISITOR ...

I'M *MR. HAMILTON*, PLANT SUPERVISOR! I'M SORRY DR. HOPPER ISN'T HERE, BUT HE LEFT YESTERDAY ON A SHORT *LEAVE OF ABSENCE!*

I'M SURE HE WOULD HAVE BEEN HONORED TO MEET AN AUTHORITY ON *MUTANTS*, SUCH AS YOURSELF, PROFESSOR XAVIER!

THE PLEASURE WOULD HAVE BEEN *MINE*, MR. HAMILTON! BUT, DO YOU SUPPOSE I COULD SEE HIS *LABORATORY?*

CALS

WELL, HE'S USUALLY VERY *POSSESSIVE* ABOUT IT, BUT... I'M SURE IT WILL BE ALL RIGHT IN *YOUR* CASE!

MINUTES AFTERWARD, IN THE LAB WHICH THE AMBITIOUS ENTOMOLOGIST UTILIZES FOR HIS SINISTER STUDIES...

THIS IS DR. HOPPER'S *CASTLE*... ALMOST HIS *HOME!* SOMETIMES HE DOESN'T LEAVE IT FOR DAYS ON END!

HE IS EXTREMELY RELUCTANT TO LET OTHERS *ENTER* IT AT THOSE TIMES... AND, IN VIEW OF THE TRULY FANTASTIC *PESTICIDES* HE HAS DEVELOPED, WE TRY TO RESPECT HIS WISHES!

I SEE! AND, YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHERE I COULD CONTACT HIM *NOW?*

I'M AFRAID NOT! HIS *CONTRACT* PROVIDES FOR SUCH LEAVES OF ABSENCE DURING WHICH HE USUALLY TAKES ALONG HIS *MOBILE LAB!*

IN FACT, FOR ALL WE KNOW, HE MAY BE INVESTIGATING THOSE REPORTS OF *MAMMOTH LOCUSTS* NEAR HERE!

A COMFORTING THOUGHT, MR. HAMILTON!

HMM.. OR *IS* IT? I WONDER..

MY *MENTAL PROBING* OF SOME OF DR. HOPPER'S EQUIPMENT IS BEGINNING TO REVEAL SOME VERY INTERESTING *DISCOVERIES!*

AND *HERE*... THERE ARE SEVERAL *CANNISTERS* MISSING ... CANNISTERS WHICH THE LABELS SAY CONTAINED *LOCUST EGGS!*

COULD IT BE THAT DR. HOPPER HAS A FAR MORE INTEGRAL, FAR MORE *PERSONAL* PART IN THE MENACE OF THOSE RAMPAGING INSECTS THAN ANYONE HAS *SUSPECTED?*

THEN, AS THE INVALID MUTANT TURNS HIS ATTENTION TO A PREVIOUSLY UNNOTICED WALL...

THAT *MAP*... IT MAY JUST BE THE *CLINCHER!*

THAT LARGE "X" PIN-POINTS THE AREA WHERE THE LOCUST SWARM APPEARED... AND THERE ARE *OTHER X'S* INDICATED AS WELL!

I BELIEVE I'VE SEEN *ENOUGH*, MR. HAMILTON... IF YOU'LL JUST SHOW ME THE WAY *OUT*...

CERTAINLY, PROFESSOR! STILL, I'M SORRY YOU COULDN'T MEET DR. HOPPER! HE'S A *BRILLIANT MAN*, DESPITE HIS, ER, SOMEWHAT *UNBELIEVABLE* THEORIES ABOUT INSECT MUTATION!

I HOPE THE MATTER YOU WANTED TO TALK WITH HIM ABOUT WASN'T TOO *URGENT!*

UH, NO, NOT REALLY! IN FACT, I THINK I'VE *LEARNED* ALL I NEED TO KNOW!

I CAN'T WAIT TO RETURN TO THE SCHOOL.. I MUST CONTACT THE X-MEN.. *NOW!!*

11.

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ALMOST INSTANTANEOUSLY, SOME MILES AWAY---

ATTENTION, X-MEN! PREPARE THE HELI-COPTER FOR A *MISSION*, AS SOON AS WE RETURN!

WE'LL BE READY AND *WAITING*, SIR!

I'VE ONLY BEEN AWAY A FEW DAYS, BUT IT'LL BE GREAT TO GET INTO *COSTUME* AGAIN!

IT'S THE *PROFESSOR!*

LET'S MAKE ALL DELIBERATE *HASTE*, BOBBY BOY!

SOON, WHEN PROFESSOR XAVIER AND WARREN RETURN FROM THEIR PRODUCTIVE EXCURSION ...

...IN ADDITION, I MENTALLY EXAMINED SOME OF DR. HOPPER'S LATEST *FORMULAE*, AND FOUND THEY CONTAIN IONIC PARTICLES WHICH WOULD TEND TO STIMULATE *GROWTH!*

AND YOU SAY HIS *MAP* MAKES YOU BELIEVE THAT THE *CORN BELT* MAY BE THE NEXT SECTION ATTACKED?

SO, ALTHOUGH WE CAN'T BE POSITIVE, I SUSPECT THAT DR. HOPPER MAY BE *RESPONSIBLE* FOR THE INSECT PLAGUE!

YES! I ONLY HOPE WE'RE IN TIME TO *PREVENT* ANY DAMAGE THIS TIME!

A FEW HOURS LATER...

THERE'S THE UPPER *OHIO RIVER!* WE MUST BE APPROACHING THE AREA YOU MENTIONED, PROFESSOR!

YES, SCOTT! IN FACT, I JUST MONITORED A RADIO BROADCAST WHICH REPORTS HUGE LOCUSTS JUST A FEW MILES *SOUTH* OF HERE!

WE'LL LAND A SHORT DISTANCE AWAY, IN CASE ANY *MILITARY FORCES* HAVE REACHED THE SCENE ---

THEN, AFTER A LANDING IS MADE ...

KRUNCH!

BUT REMEMBER.. IF THEIR *HUMAN LEADER* APPEARS, IT IS *HE* WHO MUST BE BATTLED *FIRST!*

LISTEN! THE CREATURES MUST BE RIGHT OVER THAT *RIDGE!*

KRUNCH!

AND THIS TIME HE MIGHT BE *EXPECTING* US! KEEP YOUR GUARD UP, MR. McCOY!

A MOST SUPERFLUOUS EXHORTATION, MR. BLAKE!

THERE THEY ARE! BUT, THERE ARE *DOZENS* OF THEM THIS TIME! WHAT CAN WE *DO* AGAINST THEM?

THE SAME THING AS *LAST* TIME, ANGEL!..

BUT, THIS TIME, WE'VE GOT TO DO *MORE* OF IT!

KRUNCH!

KRUNCH!

UH OH! TAKE A LOOK ON YOUR *RIGHT*, CYKE! THIS HAS *GOTTA* BE THE GUY WE'RE LOOKIN' FOR!

CORRECTION, MY SUPER-POWERED SIMPLETONS! RATHER, IT IS *I* WHO HAVE BEEN PATIENTLY WAITING FOR *YOU!*

FOR, IN DEFEATING YOU, I SHALL DEMONSTRATE THE FOLLY OF OPPOSING... *THE LOCUST!*

LOOK, MISTER, WE DON'T KNOW EXACTLY WHAT YOU'RE TRYING TO *ACCOMPLISH* WITH THESE GRASS-HOPPER PALS OF YOURS, BUT WE'RE HERE TO PUT AN *END* TO IT!

PRESUMPTUOUS *FOOL!* DO YOU THINK I WOULD HAVE *APPEARED* BEFORE YOU, IF I WERE NOT PREPARED TO *DISPOSE* OF YOU?

THE ONLY DISPOSING *YOU'RE* GOING TO DO, LOCUST, IS TO GET RID OF THAT NUTTY *COSTUME!* I...=UHHHN!=

AWAY, CLOD! YOU SHALL BE THE *FIRST* TO FEEL THE BITE OF THE *LOCUST!*

WOK!

=OOOOF!=

CAUGHT ME...OFF-*GUARD!*

ALL RIGHT, GROUP, OUR BUG-EYED BUDDY HAS *OPENED* THE HOSTILITIES! NOW, IT'S TIME FOR THE NOBLE *BEAST* TO GET INTO THE ACT!

HMM...YOU SEEM MORE *AGILE* THAN YOUR COWLED COMPANIONS...

HOWEVER, AGILITY IS OF NO AVAIL...IF YOU CAN'T *GRASP* YOUR ANTAGONIST!

WHAT THE..? HE SPREAD HIS WINGS... AND *TOOK OFF!*

IT'S UP TO *YOU* NOW, ANGEL!

IT'S NO *CONTEST,* BEAST! HIS *MECHANICAL* WINGS ARE NO MATCH FOR MY *REAL* ONES!

HE'S *RIGHT!* IT WILL TAKE HIM MERE *SECONDS* TO OVERTAKE ME!

BUT, THE VICTORY CAN *STILL* BE MINE!

SUDDENLY...

MY CREATIVE GENIUS ALSO DEVELOPED THIS *IONIC STUN-DEVICE,* TO KEEP ANY REBELLIOUS *INSECTS* IN LINE...

HOWEVER, IT SEEMS TO WORK ON *ANGELS,* AS WELL!

FRAP!

=MMMMFFF= I'M RECEIVING A *TERRIFIC JOLT* FROM THAT GIZMO--- CAN'T STAY *ALOFT!*

BUT, AS THE STRICKEN X-MAN TOPPLES HELPLESSLY FROM THE SKY, ANOTHER MUTANT COMES TO HIS AID...

THANKS, MARVEL GIRL!

MY PLEASURE, ANGEL! I'M ONLY SORRY *I* DIDN'T GET A SHOT AT THE *LOCUST!*

STICK AROUND, FAIR LADY! YOUR OPPORTUNITY MAY COME *SOON!*

SOONER THAN YOU *THINK,* BEASTIE! HE'S FLUTTERING TO EARTH NOT FIFTY YARDS *AWAY!*

JEAN ... COULD YOU TELL IF THAT MASKED CREEP IS THE DR. HOPPER YOU SAW?

I CAN'T BE POSITIVE --- BUT, FROM THE BEARD AND VOICE, I'M PRETTY SURE IT IS!

YOU TWO COME ALONG AS FAST AS YOU CAN!

I WOULDN'T WANT TO BE IN LOCUST'S SHOES! CYKE'S FIGHTING MAD!

BEAST.. ICEMAN ... THE THREE OF US MUST ATTACK HIM BEFORE HE ESCAPES!

ONE OPTIC BLAST OUGHT TO PUT YOU OUT OF COMMISSION!

NO GOOD! HE'S WEARING SOME SORT OF SUPER-STRONG ARMOR!

ZAT!

OF COURSE, YOU OVER-RATED CLOWNS!

ATTA-BOY, LOKEY! JUST KEEP TALKIN'!

I AM SHIELDED FROM YOUR PUNY RAY BY MY EXO-SHELL, AN IMPROVED VERSION OF THE INSECTS EXTERIOR SKELETON, SO THAT...

UHHNNN!

WOOSH

TELL US MORE, PAL AS SOON AS YOU MAKE YOURSELF COMFORTABLE ON MY SHEET OF ICE, THAT IS!

BLAST IT! CAN'T GET MY FOOTING! MUST SUMMON HELP..!

WHAT'S HE UP TO NOW?

HIS ANTENNAE! THEY'RE STARTING TO GLOW!

X-MEN! CONDITION RED.. CREATURE APPROACHING BEHIND YOU!

THE NEXT SECOND, AS THE STARTLED TEEN-AGERS TURN AROUND ... BARELY IN TIME ---

LOOK OUT! IT'S SOME SORT OF GIGANTIC BEETLE!

MARVEL GIRL AND I CAUGHT UP WITH THE REST OF YOU.. JUST IN TIME TO JOIN A RETREAT!

TELL YOU WHAT, WARRY BOY.. IF YOU WANNA TACKLE 'IM BY YOUR LONE-SOME, I WON'T STAND IN YOUR WAY!

WE'RE ONLY FALLING BACK TO RE-GROUP, ANGEL -- NOT RETREAT! WE CAN'T JUST RUN FROM THE LOCUST'S PLAYMATES FOREVER! THERE'S TOO MUCH AT STAKE!

ALAS, FOR THE BENIGN BEAST TO BE SO BESET... I, WHO EVEN DOFF MY MASK TO LADYBUGS!

MEANWHILE, THE HOODED DR. HOPPER MAKES GOOD USE OF HIS BRIEF RESPITE---

IT'S FORTUNATE THAT I HAD ENLARGED THAT *CARNIVOROUS BEETLE* IN ADVANCE, FOR JUST SUCH AN *EMERGENCY!*

NOW FOR MY *SECOND* LITTLE SURPRISE FOR THE VAUNTED X-MEN!

I HAD PLANNED TO HATCH THESE EGGS IN *CATTLE-BREEDING COUNTRY*... BUT, I CAN ALWAYS ACTIVATE *OTHERS!*

THESE MONSTROUS *WASPS* SHOULD KEEP MY FOES BUSY FOR A WHILE!

Z Z Z Z Z Z Z Z Z Z Z Z

THANKS TO MY *MICRO-MAGNETIC ANTENNAE*, NOT ONLY AM I SAFE FROM THEM, BUT I CAN ALSO *DIRECT* THEIR MOVEMENTS!

AS, NEARBY...

YEAH... BUT WHY DO *I* ALWAYS END UP THE *DECOY?*

PZAP!

GOOD GOIN', BEAST! WHEN THE BEETLE REACHED FOR *ANGEL*, WE NAILED 'IM WITH THIS KING-SIZE *ICICLE!*

YOU TWO AND CYCLOPS HAD BETTER FINISH OFF THAT ONE *FAST*, BECAUSE HERE COME SOME OF HIS *COUSINS!*

Z Z Z Z Z

WE CAN'T FIGHT ALL *THOSE* AT ONCE! BUT DON'T DESPAIR, PEOPLE... THE *ICEMAN* COMETH, AS *GENEY O'NEILL* USED TO SAY!

LESS *NAME-DROPPING* AND MORE *ACTION*, LAD!

THAT'S FOR SURE! THOSE BABIES LOOK *HUNGRY!*

YOU *DID* IT, BOBBY! INSIDE THIS TRANSPARENT *SHELL* YOU'VE CREATED, THEY CAN'T GET *AT* US! WE'RE *SAFE!*

YEAH... BUT FOR *HOW LONG?* IT'S PRETTY *WARM* OUT THERE-- AND I CAN'T KEEP THIS IGLOO FROM MELTING *FOREVER!*

Z Z Z Z Z Z Z Z Z Z Z Z

WATCH OUT FOR *FLYING ICE*, ALL! I'M BLASTING OUR WAY *OUT* OF THIS FRIGID FISHBOWL ... *NOW!*

WOW! I'M GLAD YOU'RE ON *OUR SIDE*, CYKE!

MOMENTS LATER, AS THE ICY COVERING FALLS BEFORE SCOTT SUMMERS' POTENT EYE-BEAMS...

OKAY, SO WE'RE *OUT!* THAT *STILL* LEAVES THE LOCUST'S *INSECT-BUDDIES* FOR US TO WALTZ AROUND WITH!

DON'T BE SO *SURE!* LOOKS LIKE THE *NATIONAL GUARD* HAS TAKEN CHARGE OF THINGS *HERE*, TOO!

IF THEY KEEP THAT UP, WE'LL BE OUT OF *WORK!*

PROFESSOR XAVIER SEEMS TO FEEL *DIFFERENTLY*, BEAST! HE'S REVVING UP THE *'COPTER!*

THEN, HE MUST HAVE A LEAD ON THE *LOCUST!* LET'S *MOVE OUT!*

AND, AS THE DAUNTLESS X-MEN TAKE TO THE SKIES ONCE AGAIN, AN AWESOME BUT HEARTENING SCENE TRANSPIRES BELOW ...

THEY CAN'T TAKE THIS *FLAME-THROWER*, EITHER! BUT, WHAT WOULD WE HAVE DONE IF THERE'D BEEN *THOUSANDS* OF 'EM, INSTEAD OF JUST *DOZENS?*

THESE *M-1'S* ARE DOIN' THE TRICK! JUST KEEP *FIRIN'!*

FROOM!

WHILE, PASSING SWIFTLY OVER THE SCENE A FEW HUNDRED FEET ABOVE, PROFESSOR X AND HIS SUPER-POWERED STUDENTS ARE PLAGUED BY SIMILAR THOUGHTS..

DEPRIVED OF THE LOCUST'S *HUMAN BRAIN*, THOSE GIANT INSECTS FELL PREY TO MODERN WEAPONS! BUT, IF HE HADN'T BEEN FORCED TO *FLEE*, THE STORY MIGHT HAVE BEEN *OTHERWISE!*

WHAT'S OUR *NEXT STEP*, PROFESSOR?

IF MY MEMORY SERVES ME CORRECTLY, I SEEM TO RECALL THAT THE NEXT "*X*" ON THE MAP AT *RYAN CHEMICALS* WAS ONLY ABOUT FIFTY MILES FROM HERE! WE'RE HEADING FOR THAT SPOT... BUT, WE MUST ALLOW HIM TO ARRIVE THERE *FIRST!*

AND, *THIS* TIME, THERE'LL BE *NO QUARTER!* IT'S THE *LOCUST*... OR *US!!*

SOON, AS THE SEARCHING X-COPTER FOLLOWS THE WINDING OF THE PLACID OHIO RIVER ...

THAT *TRAILER*... IT'S PARKED IN A PLACE WHERE THE OWNER ISN'T LIKELY TO BE DOING ANY *HUNTING* OR *FISHING!*

WITH *OUR* LUCK, IT'S PROBABLY THE VANGUARD OF AN *ANTI-MUTANTS CONVENTION!*

STILL, WE MUST BE AT ALMOST THE EXACT PLACE WHICH DR. HOPPER HAD MARKED ON HIS *CHART!* WE'LL SET DOWN QUIETLY NEARBY, AND HAVE A LOOK!

MEANWHILE, EVEN AS THE X-MEN'S SLEEK CRAFT LANDS IN A WOODED GROVE... INSIDE THE TRAILER WHICH SERVES AS A "MOBILE LAB"...

ALREADY, THE HAVOC WREAKED BY MY FIRST CREATIONS PREPARES THE WORLD TO ACCEPT THE INSECT-MUTATION THEORIES OF *DR. AUGUST HOPPER!*

AND SOON, AFTER MORE FORAYS BY MY GIANT PETS IN THE *CORN BELT*, I SHALL STEP FORWARD TO *DESTROY* THEM... AND RECEIVE THE *ACCLAIM* WHICH THE WORLD HAS SO LONG HELD FROM ME!

IN ADDITION, BECAUSE OF THEIR OFFENSIVE *MEDDLING*, I SHALL USE MY NEW-FOUND INFLUENCE TO TURN THE PEOPLE *MORE THAN EVER* AGAINST THE ACCURSED *X-MEN!*

BUT, ENOUGH TALK! THE NEWEST BATCH OF EGGS SHOULD BE *IONICALLY ACTIVATED* BY NOW... AND IN GREATER NUMBERS THAN EITHER *PREVIOUS* TIME!

HOWEVER, AS THE *LOCUST* STEPS OUTSIDE THE TRAILER, HE IS STARTLED TO BEHOLD...

SOME SORT OF *HERMIT*... IN THE GARB OF A PAST *CENTURY!* WHAT IS HE DOING *HERE?*

I HAVE COME AS A *FRIEND*... TO SAVE YOU FROM YOUR OWN *FOLLY!*

BEGONE! THE LOCUST *NEEDS* NO FRIENDS!

EVERY MAN HAS NEED OF FRIENDS, LOCUST... WHETHER HE REALIZES IT OR NOT! YOU HAVE CHOSEN TO TO SET YOURSELF *AGAINST HUMANITY*... *WHY??*

WITH THE POWER YOU POSSESS, YOU COULD BE A *BENEFACTOR* OF MANKIND, INSTEAD OF ITS *OPPRESSOR!* WHY DO YOU CHOOSE THE COURSE OF *EVIL?*

BABBLING FOOL! WHAT DO YOU.. OR *ANYONE*... KNOW OF.. *THE LOCUST?*

A THOUSAND YEARS HENCE, MY NAME SHALL BE *REVERED*... WHEN THE TOMBS OF *KINGS* ARE BUT DUST!

I FEEL THAT YOU ARE TRULY *NOT* AN EVIL MAN ... MERELY A *DELUDED* ONE!

FORGET YOUR SENSELESS PLANS... AND TURN YOUR GREAT KNOWLEDGE TO THE *GOOD* OF THE HUMAN RACE!

FORGET MY PLANS? NO... NOT WHILE I *LIVE!* I SHALL TOIL NO MORE FOR THE ENRICHMENT OF *OTHERS!*

THE WORLD SHALL PAY HOMAGE TO *ME*... OR MY INSECT HORDES WILL *LAY WASTE* TO IT!

WAIT! COME BACK!

ZISS-

NEVER! AND, THIS TIME I SHALL UNLEASH *HUNDREDS* OF RAVAGING LOCUSTS!

NO USE! IT'S UP TO THE *X-MEN* TO STOP HIM NOW! I ONLY PRAY THAT.. IF THEY *SUCCEED*... DEFEAT WILL SHOCK HIM TO HIS *SENSES!*

THEN, AS THE COLORFULLY-GARBED SCIENTIST FLUTTERS TO A LANDING, NOT FAR AWAY...

THE *X-MEN!* BUT HOW COULD YOU HAVE *FOUND* ME SO QUICKLY?

TRADE SECRET, CHUM!

MAYBE WE'LL WRITE YOU A *LETTER* ABOUT IT.. WHEN YOU'RE SAFELY IN *JAIL!*

PERFECT PLANNING! THE *PROFESSOR*... IN HIS "HERMIT" GARB AND *MECHANICAL LEGS*... GOT THE LOCUST INCENSED ENOUGH TO *HOP OFF*.. RIGHT INTO OUR ARMS!

BUT, NO MATTER! ONE STRONG *LEAP* WILL CARRY ME AWAY, AND... *UNNHHH!*

MY APOLOGIES, BUT IT'S ESSENTIAL THAT YOU STICK AROUND FOR A SHORT *TETE-A-TETE!*

THAT MEANS A *HEART-TO-HEART TALK*, IF YOU'RE BEHIND IN YOUR *FRENCH LESSONS!*

AWAY, YOU BUMBLING *OAF!*

I HAVE NO *TIME* FOR SUCH DELAYS!

OOOF!

IT'S BECOMING OBVIOUS THIS JUST ISN'T MY *DAY!*

BUT, IT MAY BE *MINE!* AT LEAST, THIS TIME HE'S NOT GOING TO USE ANY *STUN-RAY* ON ME!

SO--THE *WINGED* X-MAN CLUMSILY SEEKS TO TAKE ME *UNAWARES!*

DOESN'T HE REALIZE THAT LOCUSTS HAVE GREAT *PERIPHERAL VISION?*

HERE, ANGEL! THIS *COCOON SILK*... A TRAIT I BORROWED FROM THE LOWLY *CATERPILLAR*.. WILL STOP YOU IN YOUR TRACKS!

CAN'T STOP IN TIME... I'M GOING TO RAM RIGHT *INTO* IT!

OF COURSE, YOU DOLT! DID YOU THINK I LEAVE SUCH THINGS TO *CHANCE?*

SECONDS LATER, AS AN ENSNARED ANGEL TOUCHES DOWN ---

THAT HORN-HEADED DO-BADDER REALLY KNOWS HIS *BUSINESS!* THE STUFF IS LIKE *GLUE!*

LOOK! HE'S COMING *DOWN* AGAIN!

YES... BUT TOO FAR AWAY FOR US TO REACH HIM BE-FORE HE CAN ACTIVATE SOME MORE *SIX-LEGGED TERRORS!*

AND, INDEED, EVEN AS THE X-MEN'S DEPUTY LEADER SPEAKS THESE PROPHETIC WORDS...

THE X-MEN HAVE INTER-FERED WITH MY PLANS FOR THE *FINAL TIME!*

THESE TWO EGGS... WHICH HAVE BEEN *TRIPLY TREATED* BY IONIC PARTICLES... WILL BE THEIR *DOWNFALL!*

FOR NOW, THE MOMENT HAS COME FOR MY *ULTIMATE CREATIONS!*

SSST!

THE NEXT INSTANT, BEFORE THE ASTONISHED EYES OF THE ONWARD-RUSHING MUTANT BAND---

GROW! GROW! GROW! LET NOT ONE X-MAN SURVIVE!

NOW, HOW DOES A RATIONAL PERSON ARGUE WITH SENTIMENTS LIKE THOSE?

THEY'RE ZOOMING UP RIGHT BEFORE US... MORE ENORMOUS THAN ANY OF HIS OTHER MONSTROSITIES! WE'VE GOT TO HALT THEM!

WHATEVER YOUR PLAN IS, CYKE, CLUE US IN FAST... WHILE WE'RE STILL AROUND!

SUDDENLY, THE RESOURCEFUL MARVEL GIRL STEPS TO THE FORE, AND...

HIS ANTENNAE! IT'S THROUGH THEM THAT HE CONTROLS HIS CREATURES! IF ONLY I CAN...

SO! IN DESPERATION, THE FEMALE X-MAN HURLS HERSELF AGAINST ME!

DO NOT THINK TO STIR MY HEART TO MERCY! FOR, STILL I ORDER MY GIANT SUBJECTS TO DESTROY ALL OF YOU!

BUT... THEY ARE LUMBERING TOWARDS ME!

STOP! I, YOUR RULER, COMMAND YOU TO, STOP!

IT..IT'S IMPOSSIBLE! BOTH OF MY INSECT CREATIONS ARE ATTACKING ME! BUT, I CAN YET ESCAPE!

IN MY MOBILE LAB...IS AN ANTIDOTE WHICH WILL MAKE THEM SMALL AGAIN!

GREAT WORK, JEAN! HE DIDN'T SEE YOU TELEKINETICALLY KNOTTING HIS ANTENNAE!

..AND, WITHOUT HIS COMMANDS TO GUIDE THEM, THE CONFUSED BEETLES ATTACKED HIM... PERHAPS BECAUSE, IN HIS LOCUST COSTUME, HE SO RESEMBLES ONE OF THE TINY INSECTS THEY NORMALLY PREY UPON!

WE READ YOU, CYKE! WHAT DO WE DO TO RESCUE HIM? IT WON'T TAKE THOSE THINGS LONG TO TEAR THAT TRAILER APART!

ANGEL'S RIGHT! WE'VE GOT TO HELP THE LOCUST SOMEHOW!

BUT, BEFORE THEY CAN SUIT ACTION TO THEIR WORDS... DISASTER STRIKES...

SNAP!

THE TRAILER'S SNAPPED FREE OF THE CAR---AND IT'S ROLLING TOWARDS THE CLIFF! WE'VE GOT TO USE OUR POWERS TO STOP IT!

WE'LL HAZARD THE ATTEMPT! BUT, YOU'LL HAVE TO FORGIVE ME IF I'M MODERATELY APPREHENSIVE ABOUT THE ULTIMATE OUTCOME!

MORE *POWER*, ALL OF YOU! THE MOBILE LAB IS STILL SLIDING TOWARDS THE *EDGE!*

I CAN'T *HELP* IT! THOSE BLAMED BUGS ARE ROCKING THE TRAILER SO MUCH I CAN'T FREEZE THE *WHEELS* SOLID ENOUGH!

IT'S *GOING OVER!* ANGEL.. TRY TO GRAB THE *LOCUST*... *FAST!!*

AND, ALMOST AS SCOTT VOICES HIS COMMAND...

NO..*NO!* I CAN'T *FLY*.. MY *WINGS* WERE DAMAGED!

RELAX, FELLA! AS ONE FLY-BOY TO ANOTHER, I *GOTCHA!*

HE *DID* IT! WARREN *GOT* HIM!

BUT..MY *MOBILE LAB*... PRICELESS, IRREPLACE-ABLE *EQUIP-MENT!* ALL *GONE*... DASHED IN THE RIVER BELOW!

MISTER, IF YOU DON'T SEE HOW *LUCKY* YOU ARE, I'M TEMPTED TO LET YOU *JOIN* IT!

SPLOOSH!

YES, LOCUST... LOOK AROUND AND SEE THE *ERROR* OF YOUR PATH! THE X-MEN COULD HAVE LET YOU *DIE*... YET, THEY SAVED YOU FROM YOUR OWN *CREATIONS!*

PERHAPS...I UNDER-STAND AT *LAST*, OLD MAN! I HAVE BEEN... *ILL!*

BUT, I CAN *YET* ATONE FOR THE EVIL I HAVE CAUSED!

LET THESE DEVILISH DEVICES... MY SOLE REMAINING *MAGNO-RAY* AND *STUN-WEAPON*... JOIN MY OTHER INVENTIONS BENEATH THE WATERS!

I MUST SUR-RENDER TO THE *AUTHORITIES*.. AND PAY MY DEBT FOR THE *HARM* I HAVE CAUSED!

AND PERHAPS, ONE DAY, THAT HARM WILL BE MORE THAN OFFSET BY THE *GOOD* YOU MIGHT ACCOMPLISH!

THEN, AS THE SOLITARY COSTUMED FIGURE OF DR. HOPPER DISAPPEARS IN THE DISTANCE...

NOW THAT THE THREAT IS OVER, JEAN WILL RETURN TO *COLLEGE!* HOW LONG WILL IT BE BEFORE SHE FORGETS THE X-MEN *COMPLETELY?*

I *THOUGHT* THAT, IN THIS GUISE, I COULD SOMEHOW *REASON* WITH OUR FOE!

AFTER *THIS* CASE, I COULD *USE* A BIT OF RELAXATION AS A "MERE" COLLEGE STUDENT!

YOU SHOULD'VE BEEN AN *ACTOR*, PROFESSOR!

WHAT OF *DR. HOPPER*, PROFESSOR? DO YOU THINK WE'LL SEE MORE OF... *THE LOCUST?*

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO SAY, HANK! WE CAN ONLY HOPE THAT HE HAS LEARNED HIS LESSON *PERMANENTLY!*

FOR, IF THE LOCUST RETURNED --LEADING AN *ARMY* OF GIANT INSECTS, EVEN *WE* MIGHT NOT, BE ABLE TO STOP HIM!

NEXT ISH:

WHO IS THIS *MENACING FIGURE*... AND WHAT *INCREDIBLE POWER* DOES HE STAND READY TO UNLEASH UPON AN *UNSUSPECTING WORLD?*

LET'S ALL FIND OUT *TOGETHER*--IN X-MEN #24! OKAY, PUSSYCAT?

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MINUTEMEN

Blunt

Brian Azzarello